

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TAIPEI 01456 091025Z  
ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03  
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 MCE-00 ACDA-12 /063 W  
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R 091000Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6692  
INFO SECDEF WASHDC  
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 1456

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: MASS, TW, US  
SUBJECT: ROC REQUEST FOR 150 MORE M48A1 TANKS

REF: 77 STATE 207984

1. MISSION HAS RECEIVED FROM THE GROC A REQUEST TO  
PURCHASE 150 M48A1 TANKS AT ABOUT \$70,000 EACH.

2. FOLLOWING ARE EMBASSY'S VIEWS ON ROC PURCHASE OF  
THESE TANKS, AS REQUIRED IN PARAGRAPH 5E OF REFTTEL:  
(A) DOES THE BUYER NEED THIS SYSTEM? ROC HAS A TOE  
REQUIREMENT FOR MORE TANKS WHICH IS RECOGNIZED IN THE  
US JSOP. AS ADDITIONAL WEAPONS IN THE ROC INVENTORY,  
THEY WOULD BOLSTER ROC ARMY MORALE. THE PROVISION OF  
MORE TANKS WOULD ALSO BENEFIT THE ROC ARMY IN MAINTAINING,  
FROM A DOMESTIC POLITICAL STANDPOINT, ITS ROLE AS THE  
DOMINANT BRANCH OF THE MILITARY SERVICES. IN RECOMMEND-  
ING APPROVAL LAST YEAR FOR THE SALE OF 100 M48A1 TANKS  
TO THE ROC, EMBASSY POSITION, CONCURRED IN BXOCINCPAC,  
WAS THAT TANKS WERE NOT A HIGH PRIORITY NEED OF THE ROC  
AND THAT MILITARY FUNDS SHOULD BE USED FOR MORE IMPORTANT  
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PAGE 02 TAIPEI 01456 091025Z

AIR AND NAVAL WEAPONS; EMBASSY SUPPORTED ROC PUR-  
CHASE OF THE 100 TANKS ON AN EXCEPTIONAL BASIS IN THE  
BELIEF THAT BY SUBSTITUTING FIREPOWER FOR MANPOWER, ROC  
WOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO REDUCE SIZE OF ITS ARMY. HOWEVER, ONLY 3,610  
MEN HAVE BEEN CUT FROM THE ARMY ROLLS BETWEEN JUNE 1, 1976 AND  
JANUARY 1, 1978. WE HAVE HEARD THAT CUTS MAY BE MADE, BUT  
BELIEVE GROC WILL MAKE DECISIONS WHETHER TO REDUCE FOR

ECONOMIC OR SOCIAL REASONS UNRELATED TO THE PROVISION OF 150 MORE M48A1'S. FURTHERMORE, WE DOUBT THAT A CASE CAN BE MADE IN FAVOR OF THE TACTICAL UTILITY OF THIS SYSTEM IN THE ABSENCE OF EVIDENCE OF A PRC CAPABILITY TO LAUNCH AN AMPHIBIOUS ATTACK ON TAIWAN, 150 MORE TANKS WOULD ALSO BE OF LITTLE DETERRENT VALUE AGAINST A PRC ATTACK ON TAIWAN. (B) IMPACT OF SALE ON NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. PURCHASE OF THESE TANKS WOULD POSE NO THREAT TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. (C) MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS BY AMERICANS. NONE. ROC ALREADY HAS CAPABILITY TO MAINTAIN THIS EQUIPMENT. (D) FINANCING. ROC WOULD PROBABLY PAY WHOLLY IN CASH. (E) IMPACT ON ROC ECONOMY. NONE. (F) RELATIONSHIP TO ARMS TRANSFER POLICY. SALE WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE PRESIDENT'S POLICY OF REDUCING VOLUME OF TRADE IN CONVENTIONAL ARMS IN THE ABSENCE OF A CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED SECURITY NEED. (G) HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECTS. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT, IF THE ROC PURCHASED THESE TANKS, THEY WOULD BE USED TO SUPPRESS INTERNAL POLITICAL DISSIDENTS. NEVERTHELESS, THE TANKS WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR SUCH PURPOSES.

3. RECOMMENDATION. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS DISAPPROVAL OF THE REQUEST FOR 150 MORE M48A1 TANKS. HOWEVER, WE ARE RELUCTANT TO GIVE ROC A FLAT NEGATIVE RESPONSE. WE SUGGEST, INSTEAD, THAT DEPARTMENT WAIVE THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE ROC TURN IN EITHER AN M24 TANK OR AN M18 GUN  
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PAGE 03 TAIPEI 01456 091025Z

CARRIAGE FOR EACH OF THE 100 M48A1 TANKS APPROVED FOR SALE LAST YEAR (FMS CASE XMQ). THIS COULD BE DONE EITHER BY REMOVING THE CONDITION FROM THE FMS CASE FOR THE 100 TANKS PURCHASED IN 1976 OR BY SELLING RESIDUAL RIGHTS FOR 100 M24'S AND/OR M18'S TO THE ROC AT A SMALL FEE. THE M18'S AND M24'S ARE OF NO USE TO THE U.S. AND, IF TURNED IN, WOULD BE SCRAPPED.

4. MAAG COMMENT: MAAG DOES NOT AGREE WITH EMBASSY RECOMMENDATION OF DISAPPROVAL OF REQUEST FOR 150 M48A1 TANKS FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:  
(A) THE TACTICAL UTILITY OF 150 M48A1 TANKS IS EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE AS A MOBILE DEFENSE FORCE AGAINST AMPHIBIOUS AND/OR AIRBORNE ASSAULT AND IS A PSYCHOLOGICAL MANIFESTATION OF ROC ARMY CAPABILITY TO DEFEND THE ISLAND AGAINST SUCH ATTACKS.  
(B) MAAG HAS ENCOURAGED ROC REDUCTIONS IN ACTIVE FORCE STRUCTURE MANNING LEVELS BASED ON INCREASED FIRE POWER, MANEUVERABILITY AND RESERVE FORCES. A DECREASED ROC ACTIVE FORCE STRUCTURE FROM 12 TO 10 INFANTRY DIVISIONS IN THE 1980'S IS BASED ON INCREASED FIRE POWER AND MANEUVERABILITY. REDUCTIONS NOTED IN PARA 2A ABOVE HAVE

BEEN ACCOMPLISHED PRIOR TO RECEIPT OF 100 M48A1 TANKS  
UNDELIVERED TO ROC UNDER FMS CASE XMQ AND WHILE  
ABSORBING NEW AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS. REDUCTIONS ARE  
WELL AHEAD OF SCHEDULE FOR A TWO INFANTRY DIVISION EQUIVA-  
LENT REDUCTION.

(C) ROC HAS A JSOP RECOGNIZED PRIORITY 23 REQUIREMENT  
FOR ADDITIONAL M48 TANKS WITH MSAP PROJECTIONS APPROVED  
THROUGH FY 84.  
UNGER

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** TANKS (COMBAT VEHICLES), MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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